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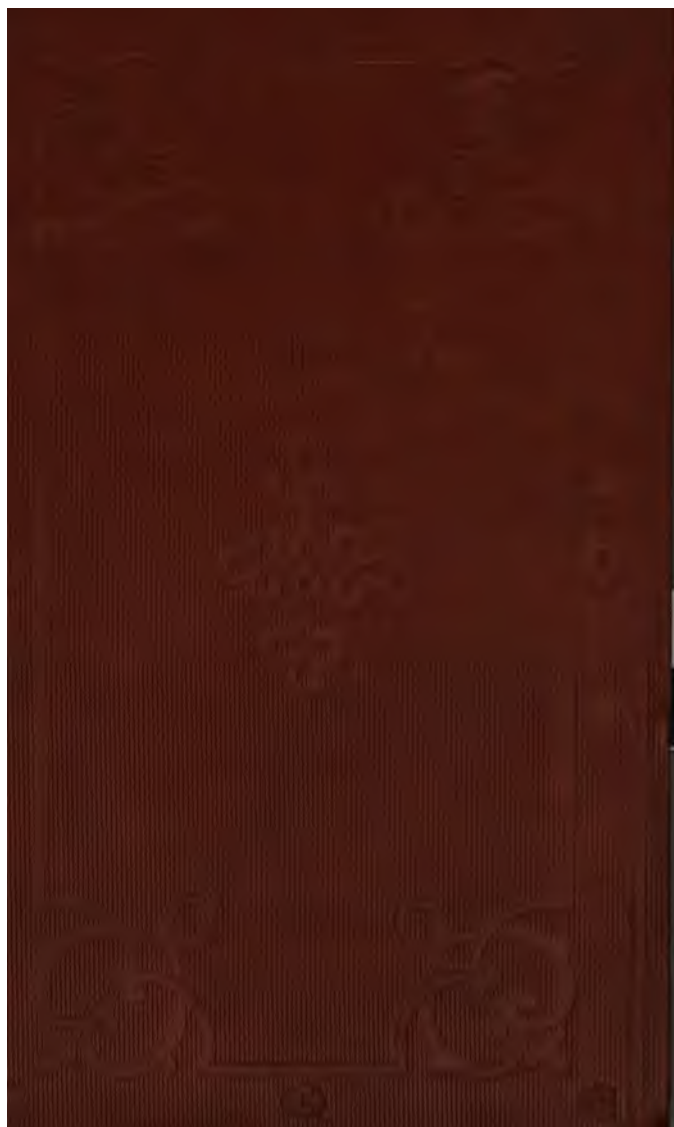
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CASTLE OF BRESSUIRE.—CHAPTER III.







# PIERRE POUSSIN :

OR,

THE THOUGHT OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"THE WEDDING GIFT," "GODFREY DAVENANT," ETC.

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PIERRE POUSSIN ;  
OR,  
THE THOUGHT OF CHRIST'S  
PRESENCE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE INTRODUCTION.

WE were finishing our journey through the honoured land of La Vendée in the summer of 1840, when one only incident befell us, an incident which showed us better than anything else the brave and religious character of the people, whom and whose battle-fields we had travelled so far to see.

The day had been sultry at Argenton.



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membered how lonely and exposed my wife was, and returned as fast as possible to the vehicle. When I got to it I found her sitting on the road-side, and two men were occupied in rifling my luggage. They attacked me at once ; and if there had been only one, I was so breathless and fatigued that I could not have resisted. They knocked me down, therefore, with ease, and tied my hands with the reins of the horse. The thieves were evidently rough country brigands, some of those who have brought disgrace upon the name of Chouan, once borne by the brave Bretons who resisted the revolution. They could not open my portmanteau, and as it was made of leather and yielded to the touch they could not break it. In this difficulty they came to me for the keys. I shook my head, and made all the delay I could, hoping that some aid might be near. Nor was I wrong ; I heard the steady trot of a horse, and calling out for help found that the pace of the comer was quickened ; and in a minute a man rode up





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CASTLE OF BRESSUIRE.—CHAPTER III.



feet. 'Now, which dog began,' I asked ? and the neighbours all cried out that it was the other. 'Why then did you beat my dog?' I said ; but he only answered me with a curse, and was going away. 'Stop,' I cried, 'you shall not beat my dog without reason.' 'Shall I not ?' he answered, and turning round he kicked my poor dog under the shoulder : the very worst place, monsieur, in which you can kick a dog. Poor Jean never gave a single howl, but fell over on his side quite dead. For a few moments I could not move for grief, and the tears ran down my cheeks ; but then I changed in an instant, and springing at him, although he was much taller than I was, I tried to throw him down. We fought some minutes, and at last he turned and ran. I followed him, he stumbled over a stone and fell, and with all my strength I was about to strike him with his own staff, which I had got away from him in the fight, when I felt my arm seized, and, turning round, I saw M. Liron.



“ ‘Look, Pierre—look!’ he said, ‘Behold your Saviour. I looked up and found I was under the Calvary in the church-yard.\* There was the figure of Christ with the nails in His Hands and Feet, and I was full of revenge and on the point of striking a fallen enemy. I did not hesitate a moment. I dropped my stick, and looked to M. Liron. ‘Will you do one thing more,’ he said, ‘for our Lord?’ ‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘what you will.’ ‘Forgive your enemy,’ he replied. I held out my hand to the stranger, but he would not take it. He walked slowly off, and I did not see him again till a worse time than that. When he was gone, M. Liron took me to his house and comforted me. But the chief thing he said to console me was, that I had learned a lesson that day which might save me from sin all my life. ‘When you are angry,’ he said, ‘or when you are tempted to any sin, remember Jesus hanging on the

\* A representation of the Crucifixion, common in many countries by the road-side and near churches.



cross. Behold Him in your heart, and say My Lord sees me.' This has been my comfort, monsieur, all my life ; and though this hand is red, never, never was it stained through revenge."

The old man seemed tired, and the sun began to lay the bending shadows of the trees upon the opposite hills. We rose to leave, promising to return on the morrow. We spoke little on our way, and the tears stood in my eyes when I thought of the angry passions which my Lord had seen in me all my life through because I would not see Him, Who was ever near me. So we passed quietly down the dell, wound up the narrow lane, and returned to our rooms in Bressuire.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SAINT OF ANJOU.

ON the following day we found old Pierre much revived, and as soon as we had tasted his cider he began of himself.


“The next great lesson I had, monsieur, was not from a priest nor about myself. Four or five summers had passed. I was married and settled here in my father’s house, and had two children. But I was called away to the war and had to leave them. It was sore work, monsieur, for poor Janette, and for me too. But there was no help. We fought for our king—we fought for our religion. M. Liron would not take the oath, and he was hunted up and down. The Blues\* rode

\* Republican soldiers.

over the country where they could, and the Marsillais cut down our poor fellows in cold blood up there at Bressuire. Ay, monsieur, they cut them down with their sabres whilst they prayed on their knees, and the blood ran down the streets like our brook.

“But I forget. I served under M. de Lescure, the Saint of Anjou. You have been to Clisson? There is hardly so much as two feet of wall standing now—they have burned and destroyed it again and again. But they will never blot him out from our hearts—never! Oh, monsieur, they all had their merits! M. Henri looked like an eagle, and was as generous and brave as a lion. Cathelineau was as gentle as a woman, and as firm as a rock. M. Bonchamp and the others were all admirable. But M. de Lescure was a saint. You should have seen him in the battle—his hair streaming back from his thin pale face, his eyes lifted up to the heavens, or calmly looking round on the field. He

was all love and prayer, and yet a bolder leader was not to be found. In all the war, monsieur, he never killed one man, nor would let his men kill one if he could help it. He gave me my next lesson. We had attacked Fontenay on the 16th of May, 1793, and lost the day; but on the 24th we marched upon it again. There were 10,000 of them waiting for us, and a number of guns. M. de Lescure commanded the left. We had no powder, and the batteries played upon us dreadfully. Shame upon us, we hesitated! Our general went forward alone. Six pieces fired upon him with case-shot. His clothes were pierced, his left spur carried away, and his right boot torn; but he was not wounded. 'You see, my friends,' he said, 'the Blues do not aim well.' We ran forward. The Marquis had to trot to keep up with us. We never stopped until we came to a crucifix which stood by the road-side. We all threw ourselves on our knees. M. de Baugé wished to urge us on. 'Let them pray,' said the



Marquis. We rose, rushed on, and the enemy fled. We were the first to enter the town, but the Marquis went on before us alone. M. Bonchamp and M. Forêt followed. They called to the Blues to ground their arms, and they did so. But just as we came up, one of them took up his gun again and fired at the Marquis. The ball pierced his arm and his breast. I thought he would die. I rushed on with all my speed, and thought of nothing until I had caught the man. I raised my sword—it was descending—in a moment I should have cut his skull in two like a withe, when my sword was beaten down and he escaped. I turned round full of passion, and saw the Marquis pale and calm upon his horse above me. ‘Forgive him, Pierre,’ he said. ‘Do you not remember to whom you prayed just now? Was He not wounded by those He spared?’ He had only just strength to speak. I received him from his horse and carried him into a house.

“Ah, monsieur, our priest used to tell

us that suffering is God's favour. The poor Marquis, he was the best and he suffered most. He crossed the Loire with the grand army after the defeat at Chollet. Every movement was agony to his head. The bone grated against itself, and we could hear his groans as we marched by the carriage over the rough roads. He lived to see a great victory at Laval, but the cause was lost. He was only dragged on to see his people go farther and farther from their homes. He lived, too, to hear of the queen's death, and died in his journey before the army got into Fougères. He was buried somewhere on the other side of Avranches, but no one survived who saw it done. M. Donissan, madame's father, he knew where it was; but he was shot in cold blood. No, none of us knew. I would have given nearly all I had to have known once; but now it is changed, now I am content."

I waited a few minutes before I asked Pierre his reason for these last words.

"Ah, you think them strange, monsieur.

But I am old now, and shall not be long here. What matters it to me where his body is, or where my body is? There are better men than I am lying all about this country in ditches, and drains, and ponds. No, monsieur, I look to another world now."

Old Janette wiped her eye and bustled about the house.

"We must go together, Pierre," she said.

"And go to our little ones," the old man added.

"I have not a child, monsieur, neither son nor daughter. My two infants were murdered on this hearth, and my son fell with M. Louis. But I have told you enough to day."

We felt that he had, and we returned to our lodging.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE TRIAL OF REVENGE.

“WE had great hopes and great victories,” resumed Pierre on the following day. “But when my next trial came the day had changed. We were hedged in by enemies who had money, and powder, and all they could want, and we were wanting in everything but courage. I was with M. de Lescure at Châtillon when the enemy seized all this country, Cérizais, and Bressuire, and all round. There were 20,000 of them at Bressuire. M. de Lescure wished to attack them, but he could not get the men together. All the people round here were busy saving their families and their cattle as well as they could, some hiding, and some going farther into the *bocage*.\* Ah,

\* Woodland district.



monsieur, the country is changed now. It was all like one wood then, for where there were fields the hedges were high and thick. It was full of trees and full of happy people; but the Convention ordered that neither man, woman, child, nor tree, should be spared, and they were carrying out the order. We have recovered our numbers now, monsieur, but the face of the country is changed. All our trees are pollards, as you see, or young ones. They were cut down, and we were cut down. But, thank God, those who perished shall spring up again.


“Well, monsieur, you can easily feel how anxious I was to get away also, and move my Janette and two babes; but I did not like to leave the Marquis at such a time, and so the days slipped away. At last, when I least expected, the Marquis said, ‘Pierre, I think you should go and see to your family.’ ‘Thank you,’ I replied; ‘if I may, I will go to night.’

“‘Yes, to-night,’ he said; ‘the sooner

the better. I hear sad accounts of our neighbourhood.'

"I was going away, when he called me back. 'Do not go alone,' he said. 'Take half-a-dozen of our young men, and be careful.'

"We left in the evening, and in less than four hours we were here. My heart failed me as I came down the last hill. The trees were very thick, and it was windy; but I thought I heard noises, and we ran on quickly. As we came nearer, the noise increased. I could hear shouts and smelt the smoke of my corn. A few minutes more and we were up at the house. I was rushing in like a madman, but my companions would not let me. They pulled me back, and begged me to consider some plan before we showed ourselves. It was as light as day; the hay in the loft was on fire, and the little corn that was left. All the out-buildings up to the house were blazing. Five or six Blues were standing in the court-yard, pulling about the things



which they had plundered from the house, and more were inside. I could hear cries inside, and struggles. My Janette's voice rose above all the noise. 'Oh, for God's sake—for God's sake spare my children—spare them!' and then curses answered her.

"I could not wait. If we were all to perish it mattered not to me. I rushed in,—my friends followed,—and in a moment I was inside. I saw my two children lying on the floor in their blood. My wife was driven up into a corner; she had a hay-fork in her hand, and was defending herself. But as I entered one of the soldiers had got round and was going to seize her arms. I shot the nearest man with a pistol, and struck down another with my sword. Three of them set upon me, but I cared not. The only thought I had was for Janette and revenge. I could see the man, who was nearest, get behind her and seize her whilst she was looking at me. I fought with the strength of ten men.

Another fell, and the two drew back. They looked at me—came on—turned and fled. I heard a rush and the sounds of fresh fighting at the door. But I did not think of it. I sprung across the room at the fellow who held Janette. He heard me, and let her loose. I looked at him. It was Jacques Loup—it was Jacques Loup, monsieur, the man who had killed my dog; he had kept his revenge all those years, and now had brought his comrades to my house to satisfy it.

“ ‘Shoot—shoot him!’ cried Janette. ‘*He* killed our little ones—*he* said, ‘Do not spare them’—*he* kicked my Henri into the ashes.’

“ I looked at Janette and then at Loup. She was wild—her eyes were like hot coals. I never saw her so before, and I never did again. Oh, it was like hell! I trembled all over. I raised my sword. He never moved—he was ghastly pale, and could not speak or move. The thought came over me—I saw my Saviour. I dropped my

sword and spared him. But it was too much for me. Faint with loss of blood from wounds I had never felt, and overcome with passions, I tottered and fell. I heard no more—I saw no more. When I woke up I was in the wood by the mill. My wife was with me—she was bathing my forehead with water out of the brook.

“ ‘Where are our children?’ I asked. She shook her head. ‘Both killed?’

“ ‘Both.’

“ ‘And our men?’

“ ‘Safe—all safe. They will return at night to move us.’

“ ‘One question more,’ I said. ‘Where is Loup?’

“ ‘They killed him. They would not listen to me.’

“ ‘I thanked God I had spared him, and fell again into a swoon.

“ ‘But blow came upon blow—God’s hand was very heavy on us all, and at last it had come to me. My house was a heap of cinders, and my children among them, and


now my wife was to be taken from me also. When I woke up next I heard a sound in the wood. They were searching it. I saw Janette's colour come and go. She got up and went away; I called to her, but she would not stay. I feared at once what she was going to do, and I was right. She went on to the other end of the wood and then shrieked out. I saw them follow her. They passed by and did not notice me. On they went, and I saw them no more. I cared not now for life. I wished they would come to kill me. I shouted—I shrieked; but no one answered. I raved—I tore my hair. At last my weakness relieved me, and I fainted again.

“I found myself when I recovered my senses on a bed in a barn. One side was broken down, and it all looked black and smelt of smoke. In a few minutes a woman came to my side; I looked up, and found it was the wife of an old friend at Courlay. She told me that the Blues had passed on, and left the country behind them a desert,

but safe. Her three sons were killed, her husband was with the army : she was left with one daughter, who was lame. She soon told me all she knew about Janette. She had pretended to be Madame de Les-cure, to draw off the soldiers ; and as she had been at Clisson a great deal at one time she carried it off well. They thought they had a prize, and took her on to Châtillon when they stormed it. There they found out their mistake ; but still Janette was so high that they thought she was a lady, and kept her a prisoner. In a few days one of the officers took a fancy to her, and when he found that Janette would not listen to him he revenged himself on her by continuing the deceit, which he saw through, and sent her as a prisoner of rank with some others to Angers. She arrived there before I was well enough to move, and, meantime, our army was defeated at Chollet. They crossed the Loire, and I was separated from them.

“ But all this, monsieur, made a great

change in me. Before, I used to think of M. Liron's advice in great things, when I was angry, but only then. I used to attend the Office regularly, but I never was devout, and most of my neighbours were better than I. I would often think of the Marquis, and wish to be like him, but I was never worthy to tread in his footsteps. But now things were changed. I had lost house and children, and probably my wife. Only one thing seemed left—my faith. I had tried my rule in time of passion, why would it not serve in time of sorrow? I thought much of these things as I lay, day after day, in the barn. I prayed more and more, and I tried to feel my Lord present in me, until at last I could weep for my sins and my cold heart as well as for my children, and I grew calm and prepared for the future. Ah, monsieur, I cannot tell you what joy it was then and in many a trouble afterwards to feel that I had lost all but One, and that He was mine if only I would be His ; that I was not alone—that He was truly





with me. Yes, when all is lost, God is found."

The old man paused and wiped his eyes, and then went on.

"You have been up to Clisson, madame?" he said, turning to my wife.

"Yes, indeed," she replied; "we came to Bressuire for the very purpose."

"And what did you see there?"

"Only a few walls and the little chapel."

"The chapel! Yes, that is the thing. The house is all gone; the gardens, the courts, are all burnt and levelled—all but the little chapel of the Marquis. Is it not strange, madame? So like its master. He lost all, but not his religion. We still kept our faith, thank God for it; and there that little chapel stands, to tell us that religion outlives everything else.

"But I must go on with my story. When I got up from my bed I had three great objects, and all seemed hopeless. To release my wife, to rejoin the army, and fight for the Marquis once more; but first


to help one whom I loved, next to my wife, above all. I had heard by accident that M. Liron our old priest was in prison at Bressuire. He had returned to see a dying man, and they came upon him and put him in the Castle. He had few days to live unless he could escape.

“The castle was a strong place in former days, but not in my time. We thought of defending it once, but it was considered impossible. Some of it has fallen in since those times, and the roof is off, but you can tell pretty well what it was. It stands so open that it is a hard place to come at, without being seen. I knew every stone of it, however ; for, when I was a boy, my uncle used to live at one end of it ; and we boys used to climb about after the nests, and to show off to each other. There was not a hole or corner which we did not know in the dark as well as in the day.

“The first thing I did was to send a message to M. Liron to pretend to be ill. I knew they would put him in another tower,


which was stronger than any: but there he would be alone, and I had a plan about it. In two days I got my answer, and found he was in the tower at the corner. I then walked in towards Bressuire before dark, so as just to see whether things were changed. It was all as I expected; and as soon as I could not be seen I crept up on the north side of the castle, through the gardens and along a wall, till I got close up to the building. Then I got into the ivy and began to climb. You may judge how careful I was, but for all I could do the ivy would give way sometimes, and a stone would fall and the birds flutter out: but they kept a bad watch. They had it all their own way in the country then, and were not afraid; and this was much in my favour. At last I got half-way up, when suddenly I felt the whole lump of ivy above me shake, and in a minute it came doubling over me. I felt eagerly about for something to hold, and found an iron bar in a window which had been grown over. I

caught at this just in time, for the ivy now pressed heavily on me. It shut me in so that I could hardly stir, and entangled me. At last I contrived to get my feet clear, and standing on some knots and holding to the side of the window with my left hand, I worked at it with my right until the bar came out. I then raised myself up and looked in, but could see nothing. At last I felt I must go forward, come what would. I squeezed myself through, and dropped down. But instead of falling five feet as I expected, I fell twenty, and lay bruised and stunned at the bottom of the tower. I soon recovered, however, and tried to remember where I was. I felt about, and considered, and found a door. It opened upon steps which ran up. I followed them, and at once the thought came through me like lightning that it was a secret way which led to the very tower where M. Liron lay. Hope filled me. I went on quickly and softly. At last I came to a door. I unclosed it gently, and found it opened into



a chimney. I felt onwards, and perceived that there was a grating which closed it up. I dropped upon it, and soon discovered that it was loose. I then removed two bars and got into the room. There I found M. Liron. He was on his knees, saying his Office, and did not hear me. I knelt down for his blessing, and then we considered at once what to do. He had secured the washing lines of the gaoler's wife, thinking they might be useful; and very useful they were. We worked out one bar of his window, and tied the rope upon the other to make it appear that he had escaped through the window, although he must have been killed by the fall. Still we hoped they would think that he had been carried off by his friends, and no better plan could be found. We then got up through the grating, put the bars down again, and worked with all our might to get some of the steps of the staircase out. At last we did so, and dropping them softly on the grating, fixed it so that no one could follow us, and no

one would think of our escaping by that way. We then returned to my tower. It was getting light, and we had no time to lose. We found a stone at the bottom. I fastened my line to it, threw it through the window, and then climbed up and through. M. Liron then fastened the line round him, and I tried to draw him up. But this was the hardest thing of all. I had no firm standing, and could not lean backwards. It was all done by the arm only, and every moment I expected the cord would be cut through by the stones. At last he reached the top, and came out upon the ivy. Then we changed places, and I went in again and sat across the window whilst I lowered him down. This again was very hard, and when he got on the ground, and so did not weigh on me, I nearly fell back into the tower. I followed him down the ivy, and we were safe on the ground. It did not take long to make our way through the garden and to come to the last wall. Before we climbed it, M. Liron made me kneel



down, and he thanked God, and blessed me once more.

“ We never met again, monsieur. He was taken a few days after near Chollet, and was shot at five minutes’ warning. They are all gone before us, our priest, our seigneur, our children, our friends ; but we shall soon follow, Janette.”

Janette rose and went to the other side of the room, and we got up to leave.

It was bright moonlight when we reached Bressuire, and after hearing so lately of the castle, we strolled down the Châtillon road to see it again. There it stood, silent and awful, on the slope above us. The long thin towers stood like sentinels leaning back wearily against the walls. It seemed white and new in the moonlight, as if just built : only the ragged tops of tower and wall showed that it was really a ruin. The north side was in the shade, black and solemn. We fancied we saw the very towers of which we had been hearing, and of one indeed we were certain.

All was still and empty. There were no sentinels, no prisoners, no groans. The bones were covered, the blood was dried up, and there needed such tales as Pierre's to make us able to feel that, within the memories of living men, war, and captivity, and cold-blooded massacre had defiled the fair scene on which we gazed. We thought thankfully of England, and bitterly of France, on which all the lessons of the Revolution are nearly lost, and for which the best blood of La Vendée has flowed in vain.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TRIAL OF HONOUR.

“ MY only hope,” said Pierre, “ when he renewed his tale, was in disguising myself. The whole country was in the hands of the enemy, and some of the towns were not so friendly to us as they should have been. I bought some clothes, therefore, of a woman who had followed the Blues to Bressuire. I was obliged to be very quick about my bargain, and could not examine them. When I did so I found them much smarter than I liked, but I had no choice: so I went into a wood and put them on. When I had done this I hid my own things and began my walk along the road to Argenton. I had not gone many miles when some people came out of a cross lane and took

the same road as mine. I avoided them as much as I could without exciting suspicion. But it made me very uncomfortable to see that a fat man, who rode on a mule, was watching me very closely. Before we came to Argenton he left his companions and came close up to me. I was much alarmed, and still more so when he said, 'I know you; I know you. It's no use your pretending not to know me.'

"'I really do not know you,' I answered.

"'Well, well,' he replied, 'you don't wish to be known, I suppose. But if so, you should not wear the same clothes. You don't remember me? I'm the mayor of Vihiers, and we supped together only a few nights ago at Bressuire.'

"I now found that my clothes had brought me into danger. But I had no other choice than to keep up the character; so I pretended not to be surprised, and said I was going back to Angers on some particular business which I did not wish known.

“ ‘Well, then,’ the mayor replied, ‘take my advice, and either change your dress or go a different road.’

“ ‘I have no other dress here,’ I answered, ‘and must take my chance ; but there is no danger now. The brigands’—for so they called us, monsieur—‘have crossed the Loire.’

“ ‘Aye, aye,’ he said, ‘but there are many skulking about ; and others quite as bad,—some of our own friends even,’ he said, looking behind him, ‘worse than any brigands, who would push a man on to do things, and then betray him to get money.’

“ ‘Can there be such men,’ I answered, ‘amongst the friends of liberty ?’

“ ‘Yes, many—many. And this makes me tell you what I have to say. You are an honest man, and I know I can trust you. Take charge of a little packet of money and jewels for me, and give it M. Saunir at Angers. He lives close under the Castle, by the river. Tell him I sent it


for fear of my friends here ; and that if anything should happen to me he must take care of my family.'

"I was most unwilling to take the packet, and tried every excuse ; but he would hear of none, and he gave it me unperceived.

"As soon as I had received the packet I parted from him, and, going round the town by the upper bridge, went on towards Vihiers. I had not gone far, however, before I was overtaken again by one of the party who had been with the mayor.

"'Well, Pierre,' he said, 'I hope you like Monsieur the Mayor.'

"I looked round, and saw Henri Petit, one of M. Charette's men, who had served with me two or three days by accident. I found he was on his way to Angers also ; but as he was not disguised it would not do for us to go together. After talking a little time he began about the mayor again, and told me what a false and cruel man he was.



He went on telling me tale upon tale about him until my blood boiled, and I hated the weight of his packet.

“‘Did not I see him give you something?’ he said.

“‘Yes,’ I replied; ‘he gave me a packet of money to take to a friend of his at Angers, for safety.’

“‘Only money?’

“‘Money and jewels,’ I replied.

“‘And whose?’ he said fiercely—  
‘whose?’

“‘I do not know,’ I replied. ‘How should I?’

“‘But I do, then,’ said Petit. ‘It is all the property of the poor mademoiselle whom he got beheaded.’

“‘What do you mean?’ I asked.

“‘I mean this. He had the care of a young lady, the daughter of some seigneur near Vihiers, who was abroad on a mission; and when his friends got into power, he made out a story against the poor thing

and got her taken to Paris to join her father in the Bicêtre, and so your friend kept the money.'

" ' But they can still claim it,' I said.

" ' When they have put their heads on again,' he replied ; ' not before.'

" My heart was now filled with anger and revenge, but my temptation was not yet complete.

" ' Why not keep the money yourself, Pierre ?' said my companion. ' It is quite as much yours as his. It is your only chance at Angers. The Castle there is not like Bressuire. You may as well try and get up into heaven as into it, and you may as well pray to its stones as to the municipality. You would only bring ruin on yourself: but money would do it—money will do everything. I have a friend at Angers who could manage it for you, and you would get your wife out in a few days at the farthest.'

" ' How ?'

" ' Why, how did your wife get sent there ?'

“ ‘ Because the officer was angry and pretended that she was noble.’

“ ‘ And the other officer will be glad of money, and will find out that she is not noble.’

“ Ah, monsieur, this was a sore trial indeed. I sat down by the way-side. I took the packet out and felt it. I went over and over it again and again in my thoughts, that the money was not the mayor’s—that it would save my wife,—that he deserved to lose it ; but then two other thoughts came in—that the money, if it was not his, was not mine ; and that I had undertaken the charge of it.

“ Petit saw me doubting, and said all he could to induce me to open it. He knew if once it was opened that it would be too late. I sat doubting on the bank and shut my eyes. As soon as I had done so, all the scene in my house came before my eyes. I saw my wife, and my children, and Loup. I remembered why I had spared him. I remembered my present Saviour, and the trial was over.

“ ‘Never—never!’ I said to Petit. ‘I will not take what is not mine!’

“ ‘Then I will!’ he cried, and tried to snatch the packet from me. I drew back, and said, ‘Henri, you are in joke.’

“ ‘Am I?’ he answered. ‘You shall see.’ And he drew a pistol at me.

“ ‘Give me the packet!’ he said.

“ I shook my head, and watched his eye. I saw him aiming, and struck his pistol up with my stick. It went off, and he fell. The ball had gone through his neck. I lifted him up, carried him into the forest, and sat down by him. After a few minutes he opened his eyes and saw me.

“ ‘Do you forgive me?’ he asked.

“ ‘Yes, with all my heart; but pray to God—pray to God!’ He turned away for a minute, and then spoke again.

“ ‘I meant it all along, Pierre. I saw you have the packet, and I meant either to get it from you or share it with you.’

“ ‘What would you have done then,’ I asked, ‘if I had taken it?’



“ ‘I would have threatened to betray you, unless you gave me the jewels.’

“ ‘And if I refused, would you have betrayed me?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Thank God—thank God!’ I cried.

“ ‘Why do you say so?’ he called after me, as I moved softly to the edge of the wood at the sound of footsteps. ‘Thank God,’ I repeated to myself. ‘I should only have sinned and lost the benefit. He has saved me from guilt and sorrow too.’ I looked carefully through the trees, and saw a detachment of Blues. They paused when they saw the blood, and four of them followed it to where Petit lay. I could see them pick up the packet which had fallen from me and lay by him, and then look at him. They shook the packet, looked at each other, and then one of them hid it in his breast. They then dispersed again; but first one lifted up his musket and struck Petit heavily on the head twice, and then left him.

“ ‘What is it?’ asked the officer, when they came out of the wood.

“ ‘Only a dead brigand,’ was the answer.

“ ‘So much the better,’ he replied; and they marched on. I went back to Petit, but he was quite dead.”

Old Pierre paused.

“But you will tell us about Janette,” I said. “But perhaps you are tired now.”

“No, no,” he replied, “I have not much more to say, and will tell you at once. You are very good, monsieur, to take so much interest in old Janette. It is natural for me to think of those days often, but it is very good of you.”


“No, Pierre,” I answered, “it is a great pleasure to us. If I had lived with you, I should have fought with you and suffered with you.”

“We are brothers, then,” he said, and held out his hand, which I grasped warmly. He went on.

“When I began my journey again my heart was heavy. I felt it was all true

which Petit had told me. There was no way into the great towers at Angers, and no way out. But still I went on, and tried to be calm and resigned, and at last I felt peaceful again, and prayed God to do what He would with us. So I went past Vihiers, and came to Martigné just before sunset. Things were sadly changed there. The seigneur was killed—the château plundered. All the doors stood open, and the garden was trodden down—so changed from what it was only a few months back. You will see it, monsieur, if you return by the route on which I found you. It has never been rebuilt. The family are all dead and gone, and it is falling to ruin. I went in and walked about through one room after another—not a person met me. There was broken furniture strewed about, and marks of the soldiers. Oh, it was very desolate! I intended to sleep in it; but it was so wretched that I could not. I went out, and saw people going quietly into church. There was no bell, but they all

came together and I followed them. It was a great delight to me to kneel again in a church after all my dangers and afflictions. I never prayed so much before. When the Office was over the priest stood and preached to us. He told us that he could not preach the day before, because it was the first day he had escaped to his flock, and he could not command himself. He told us not to despair. 'Sorrow,' he said, 'shows God's love as well as His anger. It shows God's love when it comes to those who are serving Him. I can give you no hope, my friends,' he said, 'no hope of relief. The army is defeated, the wicked triumph everywhere. The country is mad—given up to Satan. There is no prospect. We must make up our minds to suffer whatever comes upon us. But is there no comfort in this? Yes, in our very sufferings there is comfort. Jesus suffered, and shall not we? Remember your sins. Ought you not to suffer? Need you not to suffer? We both need it and deserve it. Oh, remember, my friends,



how seldom some of you came here when you could ; how little you loved your king till he was in danger ; how unthankful, and discontented, and timid you were when there was a bad crop or a hard winter. Do we not deserve far more than we receive ? Yet be comforted, the suffering Jesus sees you. If you will suffer after His example, patiently, honestly, with charity, praying for your enemies, dying for your friends, then you shall find all these sorrows joys, your tears smiles, poverty riches, and death life.'

"Ah, monsieur, was it not strange ? Wherever I went I learned the same lesson. Something always came to tell me that the Lord saw me and was near me. I stayed to confess, and then returned with a quiet mind towards the château, after buying some bread. And it was well for me that I did so, although a good man of the place begged me to go to his house for the night. He said the priest would be in soon, and I could be in the same room with him, for his house was burned

down. I do not know why, but I refused, and went back to the château and fell asleep. In the night I heard a noise, and when I listened I found that soldiers were coming up the stairs. I looked round, and found no way to escape but the window, and the fall from it was almost certain death. I had forgotten my dress, which perhaps might have saved me. I do not think it would, however, for my sleeping in the château would have shown that I was hiding. I looked out again, and was almost ready to leap, come what would, when I felt that the outside of the wall was all carved with sharp ornaments, for it was not one of the old châteaux like Bressuire. The thought struck me that I might descend by them. I tried, but found they ended a few feet below. There I hung on like a bat. My nails were straining until they bled, and the pain was dreadful. The soldiers never looked out of the windows or I should have been lost, and they did not look up from the garden. I heard them


go away, and almost before it was safe returned to my chamber. When I got in I heard a noise in the village, and crossing the château I looked out on the opposite side, and I saw they had found what they came for. The priest was sitting on a horse, his hands tied behind him and his feet underneath, and in a few minutes the troop was ready and moved off, and they never saw their priest again at Martigné."

Pierre was now tired, so we broke off his tale again, resolving to hear about Janette on the following day. But as our time was now drawing to a close, I asked leave to come early—leave which was granted with all the warmth of that generous people.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TRIAL OF RESIGNATION.

ON the following day we visited Clisson before we returned to Pierre's house. Nothing brings history so fully before the mind as the words of an eye-witness. Next to seeing things done is the seeing and hearing others describing what they have witnessed; the reading their eye and gestures, and listening to the changing tones of their voice. Thus Pierre's stories had given a new life to the old history; and the narrow lanes, with the wooden crosses marking the burial-places of the dead, and the pollard-trees, which told of the great devastation, had acquired a fresh interest. Pierre's witness also to the character of the Marquis de Lescure made us





feel increasing veneration for the remnants of his house and the memorials of his life. Again we stood and gazed upon the little chapel, and admired the machinery which he had invented for raising water from the deep well: we wandered up and down, occasionally talking to the old peasants who had served in the sacred war of religion and loyalty, and who now thanked the widow of the Marquis for the pensions which comforted their old age. At last we sat down wearily under the shade of the buildings, and scarcely had done so when Pierre rode through the old gateway into the court. He had come upon some business, and as soon as he had finished it he joined us. We begged him to sit down, and he did so. At first he was silent.

“I do not talk much, madame,” he said at last, “when I am here, but I feel much. I can remember things so different. I can remember this a beautiful château, with courts and gardens; and now you see ruined walls and weeds. I can remember how the

people from the parish would dance in the court here on the evening of a feast, and the Marquis, serious and grave as he was, would come out and lead the dance, and then talk so kindly to the old men and women, that they loved him as a son. Ah, you may be sure there were many tears shed when they heard that he was wounded." There was a silence, and then I said,—

"And all this blood was shed in vain—all this sorrow and suffering availed nothing."

"No, monsieur—no," exclaimed Pierre, with great warmth, "not for nothing. We showed France her duty, and we did ours. Ah, and it roused a spirit among us which will not die away. You see the difference, monsieur. Before the war we loved the faith and the king without thinking, but, now that we have suffered for them, we know why we believe and why we obey the king, and we are fixed—the character of our people is fixed."

"But there cannot be another war, Pierre."

"Perhaps not. I cannot tell, but I am sure La Vendée will do her duty always when the time comes. But we have set an example—we have shown how to die for the faith and the crown, and many a good heart has been made better. But, monsieur," he added, after a pause, "we cannot always tell how or why about things. It must have done good to have done right. We must have faith. Many of us have learned faith and learned to be resigned. We find that we cannot have our own way here, but yet God will see to us. We cannot have France as we wish ; but instead of burning cottages and plundered fields we are happy here and quiet again, sound in faith and yet safe. This is something, monsieur. Yes, we learn to be resigned and to have faith."


We were rising to leave, when the steward of the present Marquis came out in the

kindest way and pressed us to enter. We did so, and having taken some refreshment at his house, and been delighted with the simple kindness of his wife and himself, we left with old Pierre, and he began his story as we wound down, and up, and again down the steep and narrow lanes leading from Clisson.

"I left Martigné," he said, "with a heavy heart. I must go to Angers, though I felt it was hopeless. On and on I toiled through Brissac, until I came to Ponts de Cé. You have been over the old bridge, monsieur?"

"No," I answered; "we shall see it when we go to Angers."

"Well, monsieur, it is a strange building. It runs from place to place for a mile and a half. They say the Romans built it. I cannot tell, but it is very old — very. It seems to me like life. I thought so then, and I have felt it ever since. There was an action there in the war, but I was not in it. I have had nothing to do with it but that sad walk, which I never shall forget. I



said, it is like life. So it is, monsieur, so narrow, so long ; first over water, then marsh : very different in form, but always narrow, weary, long.

“ When I got to the end, a strange thing happened to me. An officer came by on horseback, and when he was close to me an old woman met us. The wind was high, and came down in gusts over the water. Her cloak was blown off into the horse’s face, and he began at once to rear and to back against the side of the bridge. The more the rider spurred, the more he reared ; the wall crumbled and was going, when I threw myself on the neck of the horse and weighed him down. The beast was very angry, and struck me with his fore foot ; but I held fast until the officer got off and came to help me. We then led the horse together off the bridge, and all was safe. The rider now saw that I was hurt, and spoke very kindly to me. He asked me what he could do for me, and how he could return the kindness I had shown him. I

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turned away; but he pressed me all the more. My heart was full. I had but one wish and I could not speak it. I burst into tears and cried like a little child. The kind man waited, and walked on with me. At last he said, 'I see you are in trouble. Why not tell me? Perhaps I can serve you. I think I know what you are.'

" 'Very likely,' I answered. 'You may make me a prisoner if you will. Take me to my wife, and let us die together, and our family will be extinct.'

" 'I thought it was so,' he answered. 'You are a royalist, and your wife is in prison.'

" 'Yes,' I said, 'and my children buried in the ashes of my house.'

" 'Do not fear me,' he replied, 'I will serve you if I can. Is your wife here?'

" 'Yes,' I said; 'in the Castle.'


" 'And you would save her?'

" 'With my life!'


" 'Without losing anything you shall.

She is under my charge. I will see that she escapes to you.'

"I thanked my generous enemy a thousand times. He told me to fear nothing, fixed a place where I was to expect Janette, and gave me money for our journey. And now life seemed suddenly changed. Ah, monsieur, we are too forward to hope, and too ready to despair. I was now as much too joyful as before I was too sorrowful. I counted the long hours, and sighed for the happy time. At last it came. I stood in a dark corner of the street which leads down from the castle, but no one came. I waited hours, and hours, and each hour seemed days. At last it began to grow light;—I was afraid to remain, and slunk away. All that day I hung about the meadows opposite the castle. How I looked at those black towers! The dark stripes round them seemed like iron bands. I could have torn them down with my hands. I felt a burning in my brain. I feared that




I should go mad. Then I thought of the comfort I had before received ; but, shame on me, I would not be comforted. I put the consolation away, and would not think of it. My heart was hard—I cared not what happened. People came and looked at me and passed on. At last I saw two soldiers approaching. At first I thought of leaving, but I determined not. I would stay, come what might. They came near and looked at me, but they also went on and left me. At length night came ; I went again to the same place. I still had hope. I might have mistaken the day, or the colonel might not be able at once to fulfil his promise. I waited all that night, and no one came near me. A second day passed—a third night came. I had tasted nothing. I hardly knew what I did. I stood in my old place. I heard the clocks strike, but I ceased to count the hours. I hardly saw or felt. At last the sun grew bright, and by a sort of habit I moved away into the fields. I sat down as before and





watched the castle. I could now see more towers, or less. It all swam round. Tall towers with dark bands stood up before my eyes everywhere : — sounds of watchwords or clocks kept ringing in my ears. I sat on, without moving the whole day. At evening I rose up to go once more to my post without hope, without knowing what I did ; but as I got up I saw a little girl come near me with a basket. She threw me a piece of bread, and went on. I followed her with my eyes, and saw her beckon to me. She led me on through the meadows until she came to a little willow-ground, and then she stopped. I soon came up to her, and she entered on her errand. She told me in a few words that she had been waiting day after day to come to me, and dared not ; that the colonel was arrested the very night that I saw him. He was too moderate for the party then in power, and had been sent for to Paris to die. Before he went, however, he begged the mother of this little girl to tell me that Janette had been sent away



with some other prisoners, he did not know where, and to give me a purse of gold. I heard all the child had to say, took the purse, kissed her, and walked away rapidly I knew not whither. I felt a hollow in my heart and a dead weight on my brain. How long or how far I walked in this stupor I do not know—I only remember falling heavily over something which lay upon the ground. When I came to my senses I found myself covered with blood. I had fallen on my face, and my nose had bled much. It saved my life, or my senses. The weight was gone from my brain. A fresh shower had fallen. Everything was cool and sweet—the moon looked calm and full of comfort. I thought of my sinful despair, and feeling again that the Lord was near me I burst into tears.”

The old man paused. His former feelings came over him, and we went silently up the road which led to his house. We stayed outside, and when he had disposed of his horse he joined us and sat down under

the little low tower that remained from his former dwelling, and which belongs to most old granges in that country.

“I have thought since, monsieur,” he resumed, “that I can now understand what David did. When I knew God’s will, and all my hopes were gone, it made me happier than I was before. I rose up calm, and prepared to join the army and to die with it. I had no great difficulty in doing so. The purse of gold cleared my way. I bought a horse, and, dressing like a dealer, I entered Laval in safety after the battle. I never spoke to the Marquis again, but I guarded his carriage, and heard his dying groans before we entered Fougères. But you know the rest, how we marched on through Pont-orson and Avranches to Grenville, and our repulse there. Ah, monsieur, it was then your country should have helped us. If they had only sent a few ships from Jersey we should have taken the town. They heard the firing and never came near us. Ah, that was ruin! But I have one more

story to tell you, and so perhaps I had better prepare for it now. When we marched through Pontorson, on our way to Grenville, a body of horse was ordered to ride over and set the prisoners free in Mont St. Michel. It is a wonderful place that. I cannot describe it to you; but perhaps you have seen it?"

I nodded assent.

"Ah, then I need not tell you. But we found the place full of prisoners, royalists; so miserable that it was enough to break one's heart to see them. Some were so ill that they could not follow us; but one whom I found, I must mention, because he saved me from that prison long years afterwards. He was confined in a small room on the north side, with heavy chains, so that he could hardly move. I was some minutes before I could get them off, and in the meantime he began telling me how he was sent to the castle, and how many useless attempts he had made to escape. 'But look here,' he said, and shutting the door

lest any one should see, he raised one of the stones in the floor and showed me a recess which he had hollowed out underneath, and in it a file, and bar, and a coil of horsehair rope, which he had managed to obtain. 'I will leave these here for others,' he said, and he shut them in. But before he went he scratched on the stone these words, 'Here prisoners may be free.' I smiled at his care, and little thought of what would afterwards befall me.

"Ah, monsieur, you know the rest; how we were defeated at Angers, though our men declared they would get in if it were made of iron. It was the last hope—the only way of return to our own country. I fought amongst the first, and I had only one fear, lest the little girl who had been so kind to me or her mother should be hurt. I never heard of them again. They will be rewarded. Every one was surprised at me then, I was so cool and quiet. Our men were worn out, and in despair; but I was supported. I had nothing to live for, and

in all I did I only wished to please Him Whom I remembered. I felt His eye upon me. I remembered what He suffered on the Cross, and this always gave me peace.

“ But you will like to hear about Janette. After the battle of Savenay our army was entirely broken. I hid myself in a wood, and we made many expeditions out of it. At last I crossed the river and joined M. Charette, and fought under him until the amnesty. I can tell you, monsieur, I had much need to remember my rule when I fought with him. It was bitter and bloody work, worse and worse, and it required to be almost more than a man not to be revengeful. Pardon me, my God! I was often angered, but Thou didst always keep my hands from blood.—I spoke of the amnesty. As soon as I heard of it I returned here. Things were just as I left them. I even found my children’s bones, and took them to the churchyard; but there was no priest to bury them. I cleared out what I could of the house, and began

to dig in my garden ; but it was weary work, and sad. One day I sat and dreamed of all that had been done, and hour after hour went by and I did not heed them. At last I heard a sound, and I saw a woman coming up the road covered with rags. I looked. I thought I knew her walk. I could not believe it, but it was my Janette. Oh, that hour—that hour ! There will be only one more like it.” The old man crossed himself. I knew that he thought of the meeting again in another world.

“Janette’s story,” he continued, “is a long one. We have not time for it. She was saved in a wonderful way, and at the amnesty she was freed, and begged her way until I saw her. Poor thing, she was very ill for many days when she came to feel where she was and to miss her children. But she got well, and we began to consider together what to do. We had no money, no tools, no seed, no cattle,—nothing. Before, we were in danger from gun and sword, but now, from starvation. My heart

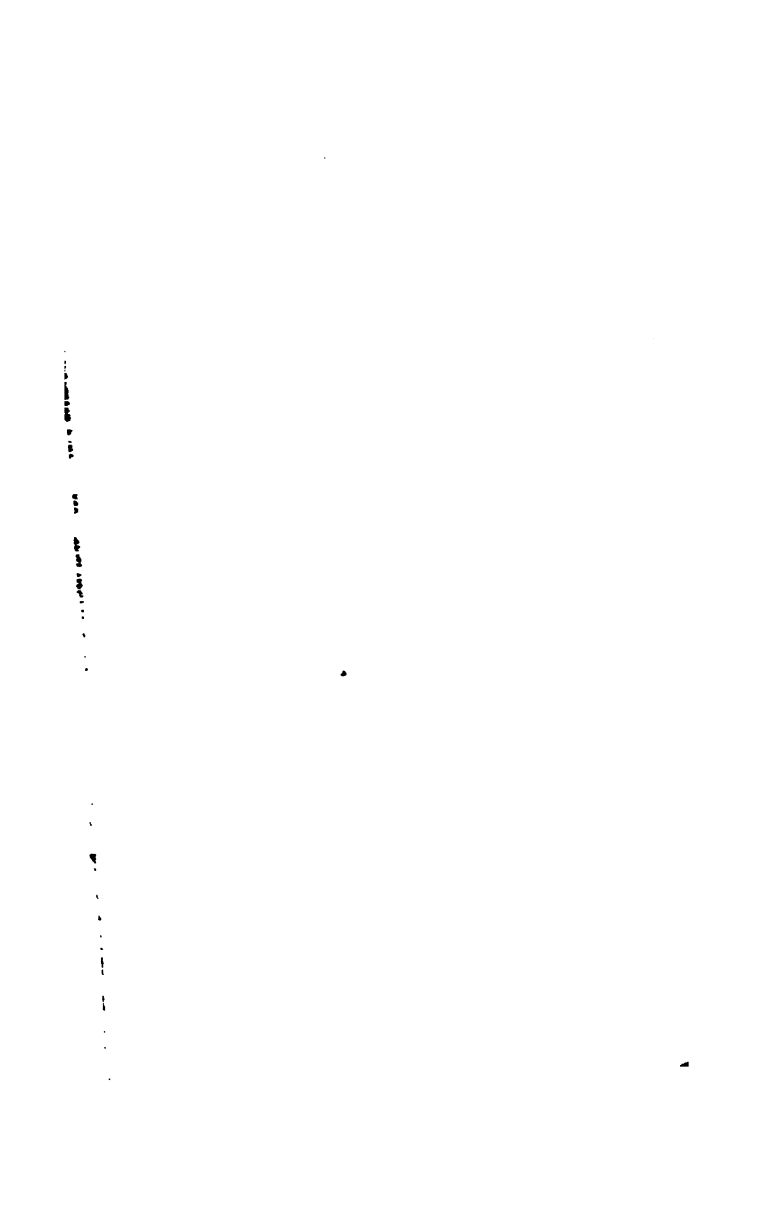
sunk within me. But I thought how sinful it was to despair after such mercies, and I remembered that He still saw us Who had watched over us in fire and war.

“ It took years to bring the farm round ; but at last we restored it. Janette gave birth to another boy, and our hearth was again cheered by the voice of a child. Still we could not live with a feeling of security. We knew another struggle must come before the king could return, and we were ready to suffer again, and we did suffer.”

We now bade good night to our kind friend, whom we loved more and more each day. The story of the morrow was to be the last, and the next day also the last of our stay. It was time for us to return, and we must part from those in whom we felt such interest. These were sad thoughts; and we consoled ourselves in our walk to Bressuire with reflecting upon that unity which all members of the Church enjoy, and which, though now broken outwardly



by such differences as those which divide the Church of England at this time from that of France, yet inwardly bind men together by ties stronger than such differences can sever—ties of affection, privilege, hope, spiritual life—ties of brotherhood in the one great family.





**MONT ST. MICHEL.—CHAPTER VI.**





## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LAST TRIAL, AND THE LAST BEREAVEMENT.

“I AM to tell you of my last great affliction, and what I thought was my last danger of shedding blood before I met you that night in the forest. I did not think old Pierre would have to hold back his hand again.

“A great change had taken place, for many years had passed between 1793 and 1815. This country had almost recovered the plunder and the fires. A new generation had sprung up. Our churches and houses were built again, and our land cultivated. We had not much to complain of. Napoleon feared us, but respected us also; and if he had been the rightful king we should have been content. Well, monsieur,

the rightful king came back. We were all ready to rise for him, but it was not necessary. M. Louis Larochejaquelin had become our great chief. He was the brother of Henri, and married the famous madame, the widow of the Marquis. But I need not tell you all this. You know the king returned in 1814, and you have heard how soon Napoleon drove him back. M. Louis began immediately to prepare the country for rising. He went to England himself; and then, as he knew me well and had sent me over to Jersey before, with instructions, he chose me again. I did not know anything about foreigners; but he could trust me, and I had made so many escapes, and knew the country so well, that he fixed on me once more. Ah, monsieur, it was a sad morning when I bid Janette and my son adieu. I wanted all my faith. I felt we should never meet again; and I never in all my life left home with my heart so heavy. Before I went, however, I begged my son to be careful. I told him that I

was getting old and might never return, and his mother had no one else to look to. "But I must go, father," he answered, "if M. Louis calls on us?"

"'Yes,' I said, 'if he does. But I hope he will not want you.'

"'Oh, father,' my boy answered, '*you* would not have stayed behind when your king wanted you!'

"I felt his rebuke, and embraced him, giving him leave to do what he thought right, and to fight for his king if he would. He stood at the gate, monsieur, and watched me as I went down the road. I looked back again and again. Oh, he was a brave youth! There was not one like him all the country round. Ah, monsieur, this war! this war! No one knows what it is but those like us."

Old Pierre was quite upset. He broke off his tale and went in doors, and I was afraid he would not be able to proceed. But I was wrong. He soon came out to us and went on.



“I had no time to lose. I rode through the lanes, and kept out of sight, for the whole country was full of soldiers. I pushed on as far as I could with my horse and then walked. In Bretagne I was almost as safe as here. I found the people all ready to rise, only waiting the signal. At last I reached Coutances. The coast was strictly watched, but I managed to get across to Jersey and delivered my instructions, and, receiving fresh ones, set out to return. It was most important that I should be speedy, for my papers were to fix where the English should land the arms and money. I did not much like it, therefore, when an old royalist of Fontenay, who saw me at St. Helier's, asked to join me. At first I refused ; but he was so sad at not being able to help the cause that I yielded. We do not know what is best for us. When I tried to land again I found it harder than ever. They had got scent of my coming, and were all on the watch. I was afraid of this, and so when we reached the shore I

got the boatman who brought us over to land first, and examine. He had not gone far, however, before I heard his whistle ;—he was arrested. We pushed off the boat as quickly as possible : they fired after us, and burnt lights to bring their vessels in ; but it was so dark that they could not see us. And now we began to feel what difficulty we were in. My companion knew very little about a boat, and I knew nothing. We sailed out from the land as nearly as we could judge, and then turned and steered, as we thought, towards Grenville. When the sun rose we found, however, that we were close to Chausey. No one saw us. We lay still all day under a rock, and then started again at night. The breeze went round gradually to the north ; and we kept straight before it, thinking it was from the east. It grew stronger and stronger : we sailed fast, on and on, hour after hour. At last we felt a great shock : we were thrown off our seats into the middle of the boat, and the water began to wash over on one side. I tried

the depth, and found it was only two feet ; we got out, made for the shallow water, and soon came on to the dry sand. I took it up and felt it ; it was so soft and fine, we felt sure we could only be in one place, the bay of Mont S. Michel. It began to grow lighter and lighter, and I saw that our danger was very great. I sat down, took the papers out of my shoes, read them aloud to my companion and destroyed them, burying the pieces deep in the sand. We now parted ; and he tried to land towards Avranches and I towards the opposite side. He succeeded, but I failed. I was arrested, carried into the castle, searched, my clothes taken away, and others given me ; and then I was put into a cell with some bread and cider, and left to myself.

“For several hours I sat still and never looked round me. At last I roused myself, and began to consider. First I climbed up to the window, and found that I was on the north side of the Mount. It seemed sixty feet from my window to a platform beneath,

and then about sixty more to the bottom, down a steep sloping rock. I looked at the bars; they were old, but not decayed. I shook one, and thought I saw the stone move. I tried again. It was so; and after scraping with my nails, I found the stone had been cut away in a triangular slip, ready to come out any moment, and then left ready. I wondered who the unhappy prisoner could have been who had laboured in this way for others, and had never been able to use his plan for himself. This brought my old visit to mind. I looked at the cell. It was very like what I had seen before. Surely it was the same. I tried to remember where the stone was, and at last I found it. I could only read one word, but it was enough. I now looked round to be sure that no one could see through the key-hole, and hung my coat over it to secure this. Then I tried to raise the stone, but could not. At last I found a piece of an old plate in one corner, and with this and my nails I got it up. Underneath I found the things

just as they were left. My only fear now was lest the rope should be rotten. It was nearly twenty-two years since it was placed there. I tried it. It seemed good, and I resolved to trust to it. If I had only thought of myself I should not have tried to escape so soon, but my despatches were of the utmost importance ; so that I determined to make the attempt that night. I ate half my bread and kept the rest for my journey, then got everything ready, and waited until dark. The gaoler came and saw me once more, brought me some supper and then left me for the night. I rose at once and began my work. It was dark and stormy, and I had no fear of being heard. I was not long, therefore, in getting out two of the bars and in fastening my rope to the other. I listened, but the wind was so loud that I could hear nothing of what there might be below, so I got out as quietly as possible, in order not to jerk my line ; and began to let myself down. At first I went smoothly and safely ; but the lower I got

the more the wind caught me; and at last it waved me about so much that I expected every moment the rope would break. When I came to within ten feet of the ground I heard a sound, and looking round I saw a soldier pacing up and down the platform close under me. I could not go back. The thought came into my mind, 'He must die.' I was filled with horror; but it seemed so important that I should escape, that I determined to do it. I let myself down as softly as I could behind him, followed him on tiptoe and prepared to strike him on the head with the bar which I had brought with me. I raised my hand. In another moment he would have fallen, when I remembered my Lord. I could not do it. My hand fell.

"I had now only one hope. I lay down as far out of his beat as I could, until he had passed. I hoped he would not see me, but I was wrong. The wind blew my rope into his face. He pulled his lantern from under his coat, threw the light round and rushed

at me. I had no choice. I got up and ran for the edge. He fired, but missed me, and I threw myself over the low wall which ended the platform. It was the work of an instant. I rolled, and fell, and rolled, and was shot off to another ledge, and rolled again. I found myself on the sand, bruised and dizzy, but able to walk. I lost no time, and collecting my thoughts made up my mind what to do. I felt sure they would think I was dead, or if not, would search for me on the land side, so I walked straight out towards the sea, and then turned to the left. I thought I had walked many miles away from the mount, but when the sun rose I found I was only two from it, or very little more. I had gone round and round, and had come to the watercourse which divides Mont S. Michel from the other mount,—Tombe-line, they call it, I think. I lay down at once, lest I should be seen, and began thinking what to do. The tide was falling fast, and soon made room for me in the channel. I got in and thought I might lie safely for


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some hours under the edge of the sand. I had scarcely fixed upon this plan, and taken my place, when I saw them following my footsteps on the sand. They went round and round first, as I had done; but I was sure at last they must come to me. I was now quite perplexed. I could not move without being seen, and twenty minutes would bring my pursuers up to me. I thought again, and resolved to go out with the tide. I could swim pretty well, and with the run of the tide I was soon a mile from the place where I got into the stream. All this time the sand was like a wall over me, and I could not be seen. At last I thought it time to stop. I chose a bend of the current, and standing up close to it only kept my head above the water. Thus, when I heard no steps near me, I looked up, and saw they were following the water inland, thinking that I should choose that way. There was no time to be lost, the stream parted just below where I was; I swam across it unperceived, and got



under the bank of another channel. All that day I passed in the water. My limbs grew so stiff that I could hardly move. I could scarcely bear life. The crabs crawled by my face. I could see the salmon floating, or darting close by me. Everything seemed free and happy but myself. The sun appeared really to strike my head with hot blows. I shall never forget those hours. At last the tide turned. I floated up on the other side of Mont Tombeline; I got upon it on the side out of sight of the castle. It was full of rabbits. I soon pulled one out of a hole, and ate some of it raw, for my bread was so spoiled that it was almost uneatable. When the evening came, I found a warm place under the bushes to sleep in, and I passed a good night. I knew it was useless now to try to land for a day or two, so I made up my mind to live on the mount, and took great care not to leave any steps or marks. And it was well for me that I did so; for the next morning they came to search it, and I was obliged to lie

several hours in my channel. They did not find my footsteps, or I should have been lost. I now hoped that I was safe, but next day two soldiers came by themselves and watched. They sat on the rock all day, and amused themselves with catching rabbits. At last they found some parts of the dead rabbits which I had put deep into a hole, and I saw them consulting about it. Very soon they came down to the sand, and began searching for steps. I now gave up all hope, and, as a last chance, swam down the stream under the edge, out to sea. It was now evening, and another hour would, indeed, put me out of their sight ; but then, where I should be at the end of that hour I knew not. I went down the stream as well as I could, but very slowly. The tide was coming in, and I could scarcely make any way against it. At last, at one turn of the stream they caught sight of me, and immediately began to run. I felt I must do the same. I got out on the opposite side from them, and ran still towards the sea,



meaning to turn as soon as it was dark. They had left their muskets on the mount, and could not shoot at me; but they gained on me every minute. It was now almost dark, and we had gone far out. Suddenly I heard a dull roar out towards sea. It grew louder, and seemed to come nearer. The soldiers stopped, listened, turned round, and ran towards the mount as fast as they could. Then I knew what it was. That immense bay of sand is dry, except twice a-month, when the tides are high, and then the water rushes in suddenly. Sometimes it comes with a roar, like cannon, in three great waves one after another, and fills the bay with water, driving up the sand on to the land itself. I had heard of this, and now saw our danger. The soldiers were nearer to the mount than I was, but not near enough. The roar grew louder and louder. I heard it come raging on. It was now close. It was useless to fly. I knelt down and prayed whilst I could. O, then, Monsieur, how glad I was, and how

happy, that I had not shed blood ; and how blessed it was to think that my Lord was near me ! I thought of many things in a few seconds,—of Janette, and my boy, and the king ; but I put them all away to think again of the Lord upon His Cross.”

The old man stopped and bowed his head.

“It fell on me like a stone. I heard no more, felt no more. When I came to my senses, I was lying on some seaweed in a little creek. My mouth and ears were choked with sand, and my clothes were so heavy with it that I could hardly rise. I got up slowly. It was early morning—I looked about. I saw a body near me, and went up to it to see whether it was one of the soldiers ; but it was a fisherman. He was quite dead. I now thanked God, and began to think. It seemed that the dead man had been cast there for the very purpose of saving me. I decided at once, dressed myself in his clothes, and put mine on him ; pushed his body into the water, and followed it. Then I made it catch upon a point

where there were no footsteps ; and wading down further I got out, and walked boldly into the country.

“ I was now obliged to beg my way along, from cottage to cottage. There was no pursuit, for they thought the body was mine. At last I was frightened about my dress. I did not walk like a sailor, nor talk like one ; and several people looked suspiciously at me. I had no money to buy other clothes, and was obliged to go on. When I got fairly into Bretagne, however, they were all friends. I soon got clothes and money, and pushed on as fast as possible. I avoided all the towns, and heard no news, except that the people were rising all through the West. When I got into this country I found there had been several engagements, and that the arms had been landed. I soon heard, however, the worst news I could hear, the worst except that which was to come. M. Louis had fallen. He fell, like his brother, in the field. Ah, Monsieur, he was forsaken. There was dis-

agreement among the chiefs, and they would not support him. He kept his word with the English ; the embarkation was accomplished, but he fell on his retreat. This was on the 4th of June. I was as far as Tiffauges by the 6th ; but no one could tell me anything of my son. Mademoiselle Lucie had been riding all over the country to collect some succours for her brother, but it was too late. Every one was full of gloom. I went on with a heavy heart. I got home, and found no one but a girl. My wife had gone suddenly to Challons. The girl could tell me nothing, but that Janette cried bitterly when she went. I set off to follow her, and had not gone far before we met. It was on the 9th that we met. I saw in a moment how it was—my boy had fallen. He died in defending his chief. M. Louis stood on a hill to direct his men ; the lieutenant of the gendarmes saw him, and bid his men fire. My son threw himself between the enemy and his chief, and they fell together.

“They are buried near each other at

Perrier, and over the place where the Marquis fell there was a Calvary put up. Ah, Monsieur, I trust we have all the same Saviour—the dead and the living. He would have us forgive, as He forgave; and I trust we do: but it is a sore trial—a sore trial. Here we are, Janette, and I:—we live on from day to day as we can. We have no one to take our place. Our blood is all poured out on the ground. We shall soon be forgotten from the land.”

I waited a time, and then said,—“But you soon received some comfort, Pierre. The emperor was ruined on the 18th, and the king was on his way back very shortly.”

“Poor comfort, poor comfort to a childless man; and many more became childless after that. I dare say you think it was all settled by Waterloo; but we did not hear of it for some time, and then there was a great battle fought here after that. There was no peace for months; all was unsettled; and when we became quiet, our enemies were favoured and we were despised. La Vendée

suffers much and gains nothing. She gives her lifeblood and receives insults in payment."

"Can it be?" I said.

"It is too true," replied Pierre. "The widows of those who fell for the Empire were pensioned by the king better than those who fell in his service. Our officers were not promoted; our sufferers were neglected; and then, 1830 undid the whole again. The Bourbons are gone, and the Revolution triumphs. But God's will be done. He sees it, and He wills it. He will set it right, or we must bear it. There is another world. Ah, Monsieur, the tocsin\* will sound yet, and we shall be collected again. We shall then meet not to part."

We took leave of Pierre and Janette with heavy hearts. We feared we should never see them again, and we never did. Three years later I had a few weeks' leisure, and pushed rapidly through the country to visit our old friend, and to see him, if he was still

\* The church bell which summoned the peasants in danger.



to be found on earth. His dog met me at the gate ; but strange faces were in the house. I went to the churchyard, and found a simple cross above the graves of husband and wife. They lay, by the old man's request, under the great Cross from which he had first learned to forgive by remembering his Redeemer's presence.

It was a peaceful evening to a long summer's day. The shadows slanted, and lay longer and longer across the churchyard. I could not go away, for I seemed to share the rest which had come at last to the long and sorrowful lives of the departed. At length the moon rose over the roof of the church, and poured its calm light upon the graves—such light as is like the reposing state of those who, in waiting, enjoy a sure hope of endless day not yet revealed. Then I gathered some dewy flowers from Pierre's grave, knelt down in prayer, and left the place not to return.

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